

A
Refutation of the *Atheistical Notion*
OF
Fate, or Absolute Necessity.

IN A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of *St. Paul,*
November the Seventh, 1 6 9 8.

BEING
The Eighth of the LECTURE for that Year,
Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle, Esq;*

By *JOHN HARRIS, M.A.*
and Fellow of the ROYAL-SOCIETY.

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J E R E M. ix. 24.

Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, who exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth : for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord.

I Did, in my last Discourse, begin to Speak to the Second Particular considerable in these Words, viz.

An Account of some of those Attributes which God is here said to Exercise in the Earth, and in which he Delights.

On which I did not think it necessary to Discourse particularly ; but from thence took an Occasion to Remove two Great Bars to the true Knowledge of God and of his Attributes, which Sceptical and Unbelieving Men had raised in the Way. Which were These :

- I. That there is in reality no such Thing as Moral Good or Evil : But that all Actions are in their own Nature indifferent.
- II. That all things are determined by absolute Fatality : And that God himself, and all Creatures whatsoever, are Necessary Agents, without having any Power of Choice, or any real Liberty in their Natures at all.

The former of These I did then dispatch, plainly proving the Existence of Moral Good and Evil, and answering the Objections against it.

Dr. Cudworth
in Preface to
his Intellectual
System.

I proceed now to speak to the latter; which is an Objection that our Adversaries are very fond of, and do all of them, upon Occasion, have recourse to. And it is indeed a great Point gain'd if they could make it out, and will effectually destroy all manner of Religious Obligation, and all dread of Punishment for doing amiss. For as one observes on these Three things all Religion is founded: 1. That there is a God who made, presides over, and governeth all things. 2. That there are some things *εὔσται καλὰ ἔσθλα*, in their own Natures good and just. 3. That there is also something *ἐν ἡμῖν*, something in our own Power to do, whereby we are Accountable for our Actions, and become guilty when we do amiss. But there can certainly be neither Good nor Evil in any Man's Actions, and no Rewards or Punishments can be the Consequents of them, if nothing at all be in our own Power, if whatever we act or commit, it is absolutely impossible for us to avoid acting or committing. Which yet must be the case, if, as they assert, *Things are determined by absolute Fatality; and that God himself and all Creatures whatsoever are necessary Agents, without having any Power of Choice, or any real Liberty in their Natures at all.*

I shall therefore at this Time, 1. Shew you that this is plainly their Assertion, from their own words.

2. I shall endeavour to shew the Groundlessness of those Reasons on which they build their Hypothesis.

And 3. from some Arguments, Establish the contrary Position of the Freedom and Liberty of Human Nature.

1. And

1. And that this is the Assertion of the Two great Atheistical Writers, is very plain, Mr. *Hobbs* declares himself to be of the Opinion, (a) *That no Man can be free from Necessitation. That Nothing taketh beginning from it self, but from the Action of some other Immediate Agent without it self. And that therefore, when first a Man hath an Appetite or Will to something, to which immediately before he had no Appetite nor Will, the Cause of his Will is not the Will it self, but something else not in his own disposing. So that whereas it is out of Controversie that of Voluntary Actions the Will is the Necessary Cause, and by this which is said, the Will is also caused by other things whereof it disposeth not, it followeth, that Voluntary Actions have all of them Necessary Causes, and therefore are necessitated.* (b) *This (saith he also) is a certain Truth; that there are Certain and Necessary Causes which make every Man to will what he willeth, lb. p. 306. And then as to the Deity, I have already more than once taken notice, That Hobbs denies Him any Understanding, Sense, or Knowledge; (c) and asserts him to be without any Ends or Designs in his Actions and Operations. Which plainly makes Him an Agent absolutely and physically Necessary; as, indeed, follows also from the Notion of his Being Corporeal, which the same Writer every where maintains (d).*

(a) *Hobbs Tripos, p. 297.*

(b) *Ibid. p. 312.*

(c) *Vid. Sermon V. p. 51. Sermon VI. p. 5.*

(d) *Vid. Sermon V. p. 49.*

Spinoza also is very Express in this Matter, as I have already shewn (e) in some Measure. *In mente* (saith he) *nulla est absoluta five libera voluntas; sed Mens ad Hoc vel illud Volendum determinatur à Causâ, quæ etiam ab aliâ, & hæc iterum ab aliâ & sic in Infinitum* (f). And in another place, *Voluntas non potest vocari Causa libera, sed Tantum necessaria.* (g) And

(e) *Sermon V. p. 51.*

(f) *Spinoza Op. Posthum. p. 85.*

(g) *p. 28.*

yet

yet on another Occasion, and in another Book, he hath these words, *Clarè & distinctè Intelligimus, si ad Nostram naturam attendamus, nos in nostris actionibus esse liberos, & de multis deliberare propter id solum, quod volumus* (a). Which is as plain and palpable a Contradiction to what he, with the same air of Assurance, delivers in other places, as can possibly be.

(a) Princep.
Philos. Cartes.
Demonstrat.
P. 103.

Mr. Hobbs also cannot be acquitted from expressly contradicting himself as to this Point of Liberty and Necessity; for he tells us in his Reasons for his Opinion) (b) *That he that reflecteth on himself cannot but be satisfied. That a Free Agent is he that can do if he will, and forbear if he will.* And such an Agent he allows Man to be, and saith he hath proved it too. But how he will reconcile this with his Assertion that *no Man can be free from Necessitation*, and that all our Actions have necessary Causes, and therefore are necessitated, I cannot imagine. As to Spinoza's Account of the Deity, in Reference to this Point, I have given a hint or two of it already. He makes God to be the same with Nature, or the Universe, to be Corporeal and an absolutely necessary Agent; one who cannot possibly help doing as he doth; one who hath no Power of Creation, nor doth act according to free Will (c). But is Limited and Restrained to one constant Method of Acting by the Absolute Necessity of his Nature, or by his Infinite Power. And lest any one should misunderstand him so far, as to imagine that he means by this, that God is by the Excellency and Perfection of his Nature, in all his Operations exactly conformable to the Rules of Justice, Goodness and Right Reason; He plainly excludes that Notion in these words; *Qui dicunt Deum omnia sub*

(b) Hobbs Tripos, P. 314.

(c) p. 29. Op.
Posthum. and
P. 33. 18.

sub Ratione Boni agere, Hi aliquid extra Deum videntur ponere, quod à Deo non dependet, ad quod Deus tanquam ad Exemplar in Operando attendit, vel ad quod, tanquam ad certum scopum collimat : Quod profectò nihil aliud est quam Deum Fato subicere (a).

(a) Op. Posth.

Now, I think nothing can more shew the wicked Perverseness of this Writer's Mind, than this Passage; For he could not but know very well that when Divines assert the Deity to be *Essentially* and *necessarily Good*, they do not mean that Goodness is any thing *Extrinsic* to the Divine Nature, much less that it is something which hath *no dependance* upon it: but only that the Excellency and Perfection of his Nature is such, as that it is in every thing exactly conformable to Right Reason; and therefore this was certainly a wilful Perversion of their Sense, set up on purpose to overthrow the Notion of Moral Goodness in the Deity. But how vain is it for him to tell us, that for the Deity to Act *sub Ratione Boni*, is for Him to be Subject to Fate, when at the same time he Himself Asserts, that God is in every respect a Necessary Agent, without any *free Will*, nay, without any *Knowledge* or *Understanding* in his Nature at all? This is so plain a Demonstration, that it was his chief and Primary Design to banish out of Mens Minds the Notion of Moral Goodness, that nothing can be more: and therefore tho' he was resolved to Introduce absolute Necessity into all Actions both Divine and Human; yet it should be such an one as should leave no Umbrage for any distinction between Good and Evil, or any Foundation for Rewards and Punishments. And in this Notion of Necessity, these Writers follow *Democritus*, *Heraclitus*, *Leucippus*, and that Atheistical.

P. 32.

istical Sect; who maintain'd that there was Nothing in all Nature but *Matter* and *Motion*. And therefore when these Modern Writers assert that *there is nothing in the Universe but Body*, as they do, they run *Fate* farther than most of the Old Heathen Patrons of Necessity did. For there was none but the *Democritick Sect*, that supposed *Fate* to have a Power over the Will of Man; and in this particular, even *they* were deserted by *Epicurus*; as I observe below. The *Pythagoreans*, *Platonists*, and *Stoicks* agreed that the *Mind of Man was free*. And 'tis well known that the *Stoicks* did in this *Free Power* of the Will of Man, found that arrogant Assertion of theirs, That a *Wise Man* was in one respect more excellent than the Gods; for they were Good by the Necessity of their Nature and could not help it, whereas Man had a Power of being otherwise, and therefore was the more commendable for being so. There was, indeed, some of the Poets, and some few of the Philosophers too, who did subject the Gods themselves to *Fate* or Necessity. Thus *Seneca* in one place saith, *Necessitas & Deos alligat; Irrevocabilis Divina pariter ac Humana Cursus vehit. Ille ipse omnium Conditor ac Rector scripsit quidem Fata, sed sequitur, semper paret, semel jussit*. Which Opinion is effectually refuted and exposed by *Lucian*, in that Dialogue of his called *Ζῆς ἐλεγχόμενος*. As also by *Lactantius* in his First Book *De falsa Religione*, Chap. 11. But this, as I doubt not but *Seneca* and some others understood in a softer sense than at first sight it appears to have, so was it the Doctrine of but a few; for generally the Heathens did fully believe that Prayers and Sacrifices would alter a Man's Fortune and Circumstances for the

the better ; that they would appease the Anger, and gain the Favour and Blessing of the Gods, and that Their Nature was not so absolutely Fatal and Necessary, but that they could freely deal with their Creatures according as they deserved at their hands. For we find *Balbus* the Stoick mentioned by *Cicero*, telling us, That the Nature of God would not be most Powerful and Excellent, if it were Subject to the same Necessity or Nature, *Quæ Cælum, maria, terræq; reguntur : Nihil Enim est præstantius Deo, Nulli igitur est Naturæ Obediens & Subjectus.* So that these Writers tread in the Steps of the worst, and most Atheistical of the Heathen Philosophers, and maintain a more rigid Fate, and a more irresistible Necessity than most of them did. But,

2. I come next to shew the Groundlessness of those Reasons and Arguments on which these Men build their Hypothesis of Absolute Necessity.

And first as to the Reasons of Mr. *Hobbs*. The Chief that he brings against the freedom of Human Actions are these, saith Mr. *Hobbs*, *In all Deliberations and alternate Successions of Contrary Appetites, 'tis the last only which we call Will ; this is immediately before the doing of any Action, or next before the doing of it become Impossible.* Also, Nothing, saith he, can take beginning from it self, but must do it from the Action of some other immediate Agent without it ; if therefore a Man hath a Will to something, which he had not before : the Cause of his Willing is not the Will it self, but something else not in his own disposing. So that whereas 'tis out of Controversie, that of Voluntary Actions the Will is the Necessary Cause ; and by this which is now said, the Will is also Caused by Other

things whereof it disposeth not, it follows that Voluntary Actions have all of them Necessary Causes, and therefore are necessitated. Agen also, Every sufficient Cause, saith he, is a Necessary one, for if it did not produce its Effect necessarily, 'twas because something was wanting to its Production, and then it was not sufficient. Now from hence it follows that whatsoever is produced, is produced Necessarily, and consequently all Voluntary Actions are Necessitated. And to define a Free Agent to be that, which when all things are present which are necessary to produce the Effect, can nevertheless not produce it, is Contradiction and Nonsense; for 'tis all one as to say the Cause may be sufficient (i. e.) Necessary, and yet the Effect shall not follow. This is the Substance of all Mr. Hobbs his Proofs against Free Will; in which, there are almost as many Mistakes as there are Sentences; and from hence it plainly will appear, that either he had no clear Idea's of what he wrote about; or else did designedly endeavour to perplex, darken and confound the Cause: For in the first place, He confounds the Power or Faculty of Willing in Man with the last act of Willing, or Determination after Deliberating. And consequently doth not distinguish between what the Schools would call Hypothetical and Absolute Necessity: which yet ought to be carefully done in the Point between us; for an Agent may be free, and no doubt every Man is free to deliberate on, and to compare the Objects offered to his Choice, and yet not be so after he hath chosen. Then, indeed, Necessity comes in; 'tis impossible for any one to choose and not to choose, or to determine and not to determine; and after the Election is made, no one ever supposed that a Man

is.

is free not to make it. And therefore if by the *Will* Mr. Hobbs means that *last Act of Willing* or Electing, which immediately precedes Acting, or which is next before the doing of a thing become impossible, as he expresseth himself; he fights with his own shadow, and opposes that which no body ever denied: for no Man ever supposed *Freedom* and *Determination* to be the same thing; but only that Man before he determined was free, whether he would determine so and so, or not. And accordingly he himself defines a voluntary Agent, to be him that hath not made an end of Deliberating (a).

(a) Tripos,
p. 311.

Agen, 2. 'Tis hard to know what he means here, by *Nothing taking its beginning from it self*: he is talking about *Voluntary Actions*, and about the freedom of Human Nature, and therefore should refer this to the *Will* of Man: but the Instances he afterwards produces, are of *Contingent Things* (b), which are nothing at all to his purpose. But if this be spoken of the *Will*, what will it signifie? I grant Nothing can take its beginning from itself; the Will of Man took its beginning from God, and Voluntary Actions (we say) take their beginning from the Faculty or Power of Willing placed in our Souls: But what then? doth it follow from thence, that those Actions we call *Voluntary* are *Necessitated*, because that they take their Original from that free Power of Election God hath placed in our Natures, and not from themselves? I dare say, no one can see the consequence of this part of the Argument. And it will not in the least follow from hence, that the Cause of a Man's Willing, is not the Will it self; but something else not in his own disposing: Which yet he boldly asserts.

(b) Ibid. 315.

(a) Mr. Lock,
in his Essay of
Humane Under-
standing.

It is the *Power of Willing*, or that *Faculty* which we find in our selves, of *being free* (in many Cases) to Act or not Act, or to Act after such a particular manner, which is generally called the *Will*; and this is commonly said to be *free*. Tho' I think (as one hath observed) (a) it is not so proper a way of Speaking, as to say, the *Man is free*. For besides that 'tis not usual, nor indeed proper, to predicate one Faculty of another; 'tis hardly good sense to say the *Will is free*, in the manner now explain'd; for that would be the same thing as to say, that a free Power is free; whereas it is not the Power, but the Man that hath the Power, that is *free*. But however the Other way of Expression hath prevailed and doth do so, and I don't think any one is misled by it into Error; for that which every body understands and means by saying the *Will of Man is free*, is, that Man hath in his Nature such a *free Power*, as is called his *Will*. Now from hence it will not follow that a *Man* is free whether he will *Will*, or not; for he *must Will* someway, either to Act, or not to Act; or to Act after such a particular manner. But it will follow, that when a Man hath made any particular *Volition*, or hath determined the Point whether he shall Act, or forbear to Act, he is then no longer at Liberty, as to this particular Case and Instant; for the Determination is then actually made, and the Man no longer free not to make it. But this proves nothing at all against the Liberty or Freedom of the Mind of Man.

Again, what doth Mr. *Hobbs* mean by the *Will's being the Necessary Cause of Voluntary Actions*? Doth he mean that the Will of Man must of Necessity
act

act freely, and produce Actions voluntarily ; if he doth, we are agreed ; but if he means that the Will is previously necessitated in every Act of Volition to Will just as it doth, and could not possibly have willed otherwise ; this is to beg the Question, and to take for granted the great thing in Dispute ; 'tis to call that *out of Controversie*, which is the only thing *in Controversie* ; which indeed, when a Man contradicts the Common Sense and Reason of Mankind, without Proof, is the best way of Proceeding.

But that which looks most like an Argument for the Necessity of all Humane Actions, is this which he brings in the last place. *That Cause* (saith he) *is a sufficient Cause which wanteth nothing requisite to produce its Effect, but such a Cause must also be a Necessary one ; for had it not necessarily produced its Effect, it must have been because something was wanting in it for that Purpose, and then it could not have been sufficient : So that whatever is produced, is produced necessarily ; for it could not have been at all without a sufficient (or necessary) Cause ; and therefore also, all Voluntary Actions are necessitated.*

Now all this proves to his Purpose (I think) just nothing at all : He proceeds on in his former Error of confounding the *Act of Willing* with the *Power of Willing* ; and of making *Hypothetical* the same with *absolute Necessity* ; for, not now to dispute what he saith of every *sufficient Cause's being a Necessary one* ; allowing that when ever any Volition or Determination is made, or when ever any Voluntary Action is done, that the Will of Man was a sufficient Cause to produce that Effect ; nay, that it did at last necessarily produce it ; he can inferr nothing from hence
more

more than this; That when the Will hath determined or willed, 'tis no longer free to Will, or Nill that particular thing at that particular Instant; which I don't believe any Body will ever, or ever did deny. But this will not prove at all that the Will was necessitated to make that Determination *à Priori*, and that it could have made no other; which yet is what he means, and ought to have clearly made out. For the same Power or Faculty of Liberty, which enabled it to make that Determination, would have been a sufficient Cause for it to have made another contrary to it, or differing from it: and then when that had been made, it would have been as necessary as the former. And therefore that Definition of a *Free Agent's being that, which when all things are present which are needful to produce the Effect, can nevertheless not produce it*, (tho' I don't think it the best) doth not, when rightly understood, *imply any Contradiction, nor is it Nonsense* at all. For the meaning of it is, That he is properly Free, who hath the Power of Determination in himself; and when all Requisites are ready, so that nothing shall extrinsically either hinder him from, or compel him to Act, can yet choose whether he will Act or not.

Thus, if a Man hath Pen, Ink and Paper, and a place to write upon, his Hand well and at Liberty, and understands how to write; he hath all *things present that are needful to produce the Effect of Writing*; yet he can nevertheless not produce that Effect; because he can choose after all, whether he will write or no.

Mr. *Hobbs* defines a Free Agent to be *him that can do if he will, and forbear if he will, and that Liberty*

Liberty is the absence of all external Impediments (a) ; (a) Tripod,
 which if he intended any thing by it, but to palliate
 a bad Cause, and to amuse the Person he wrote to,
 is as much Nonsense and Contradiction to what he
 himself advances about Necessity as is possible. For
 how a Man can be said to Act necessarily, that hath
 no *external Impediments* to hinder him, or Causes to
 compel him, but is free to *Act if he will or forbear if*
he will, is what I believe no Man can possibly conceive.

Thus we see plainly, that this great Patron of Necessity hath very little to say for his Darling Notion, and that he plainly contradicts and is Inconsistent with himself. Had he indeed dared speak out, and thought it time to declare his Opinion freely, he would, no doubt, have proceeded on other Grounds in this Point, and made use of Arguments more agreeable to his *Set of Principles* : which being allowed him, would have demonstrated an absolute Necessity of all things whatsoever. For he was a thorough Corporealist, and maintained that there was nothing more in Nature, but *Matter and Motion* ; which if it were true, it is most certain, that all Things and Actions must be inevitably Fatal and Necessary ; for (as Mr. Lock well observes) nothing but *Thought or Willing*, in a *Spirit*, can begin Motion. The Necessity therefore in such an Hypothesis would be the true Ancient Democritick Fate, the *ὑλικὴ ἀνάγκη*, or, as Epicurus calls it, *τῆ φυσικῶν ἐμμετρήν*, a through *Material necessity Mechanically* producing all Things: or the *Fate of the Naturalists*, who held nothing besides *Matter and Motion*. But this Notion, for some Reasons best known to himself, he did not think fit to insist on, when he wrote this Tract against
 the

the Liberty of Human Nature. Tho' his Successor *Spinoza*, with a little Variation did; whose Arguments we must next consider.

Spinoza, as I have formerly shewed, was an Absolute Corporealist as well as Mr. *Hobbs*; but finding that Cogitation could never be accounted for from Matter and Motion only, he supposes Cogitation Essential to Matter; and as he makes but one only Substance in the World, which is the Matter of All Things, or God; so he supposes Cogitation to be one of the Essential Attributes of this Deity, as Extension is the other. And from hence he concludes, *That all things, according to the Infinite variety of their several Natures, must necessarily flow from God or the whole, and must be just what they are, and cannot be, nor could not possibly have been, any otherwise* (a). He doth indeed Stile the Deity *Causa Libera*, and say *he is only so* (b). But the reason he assigns for it, is only because *nothing can compel him to, or hinder him from doing any Thing*; but he expressly denies him to have either *Understanding* or *Free Will* (c). And he declares oftentimes, That all things flow from the Deity by as *Absolute a Necessity*, as that the Three Angles of a Triangle are equal to Two right ones. And then as to the *Mind of Man*, he gives this Reason why it cannot have any free Will; *Quia mens ad hoc, vel illud Volendum determinatur à Causâ, quæ etiam ab alia, & hæc iterum ab aliâ & sic in Infinitum* (d). The same thing also he asserts in another Place (e), and from thence undertakes to prove also, that God cannot have any *Free Will*; and withal saith, That *Understanding and Will*, as they are called, belong to the Nature of God, just as *Motion and Rest*,

(a) Ex necessitate Divinae naturæ, Infinitis modis sequi debent. Op. Posthum.

P. 16. 18.

(b) P. 17.

(c) P. 18.

Tract. Theol.

Polit. c. 4. p. 63.

(d) Op. Posthum.

P. 85.

(e) P. 28.

and other Natural Things do, which are absolutely determined to Operate just as they do, and cannot do otherwise (a). This is the Argument of *Spinoza*, to prove that there is no such thing as freedom in the Nature of Man, but that he is determined in every thing by Absolute and Inevitable Necessity. And this Necessity also 'tis plain according to him, is purely *Physical* and *Mechanical*. (a) P. 29.

As to the Refutation of which, I think, I have already effectually removed the foundation on which it is all built, by proving that there are such *Beings as Immaterial Substances*, and that *God himself* is such an One, or a *Spirit* (b). For all the Necessity *Spinoza* contends for, depends purely on his *Notion* of the Deity; as appears sufficiently from what I have produced of his words. If therefore it be true, that God be an *Immaterial Substance*, a Being *Distinct* from Nature, or the Universe; and the Creator and Producer of all things, (as I think I have very clearly proved) 'tis most certain that the whole Chain of *Spinoza's* Argument for Necessity is broken to pieces. For the Reason he assigns for the necessary Operations of the Deity, are not the Perfections of his Nature determining him to *Good* and *Just*, *Lovely* and *Reasonable* things; but that the Deity being *Universal Nature*, All things and Operations are *Parts of him*, and their several Ways and Manners of Acting and existing according to the necessary Laws of Motion and Mechanism, are his *Understanding and Will*: which Ignorant People, he saith, may perhaps take in a literal Sense, and think that God can properly *Know* or *Will* any thing; but that in reality there is no such thing as Understanding or Free Will in God, since

all things flow from Him by Inevitable Necessity. And if there be not any freedom in the Deity, that is in the *whole*, there can be none in *Men*, or in any other Beings, who are but *Parts* of him.

If this indeed be true, that there is no other God but Nature; then 'tis easie to see that all things must be governed by *absolute Fatality*, and be in every respect *Physically necessary*; there can then be no such thing as Contingency, or any Voluntary Actions; and if we were sure of this, 'tis indeed the greatest Ignorance and Folly in the World, to pretend to talk any thing about it. But on the other hand, if there be a Deity who is an *Infinitely perfect Being, distinct from Nature*: who *Created* all things by the Word of his Power, and for whose sole Pleasure they are and were Created, then none of those Consequences will follow; but it will appear very reasonable to believe, that God hath still a Care and Providence over that World which he made at first: and that he *delights to exercise loving Kindness, Judgment and Righteousness in the Earth*; as the Prophet here speaks: That he hath made some Creatures capable of *Knowing and Understanding* this, and who consequently have a free Power, as in other things, so of giving Praise and Glory to so Great and Wonderful a Being, nay, and of *Glorying* themselves in being capacitated to attain so Excellent a Knowledge. And that Man hath such a Power or Freedom of Will, in his Nature, is what I shall now proceed in the last place plainly to prove.

1. And the first Argument I shall make use of to demonstrate this, shall be the *Experience of all Mankind*. And this, one would think, should be of great Weight,
and

and turn the Scale against all the Atheistical Metaphysics in the World; and so, no doubt it would, were it not wicked Mens Interest to advance the contrary Notion. Now that we have a free Power of deliberating, in many Cases, which way 'tis best for us to proceed; that we can act this way or that way, according as we like best; and that we can often forbear whether we will Act at all, or not, is a Truth so clear and manifest, that we are (I think) almost as certain of it as we are of our own being and Existence; and 'tis an unimaginable thing how any Man can be persuaded that he hath no such Power (a). Indeed, one may by *Sophistical words, Metaphysical Terms*, and abstruse Unintelligible Banter, be perhaps a little amused and confounded for the present. But that any one should by such a *Jargon* be persuaded out of his Senses, his Reason, and his Experience, and continue in that Opinion, is what I do believe never yet befel any Rational and Thinking Man. When *Zeno* brought his silly *Sophistical Argument* to prove there was no such thing as Motion; his Antagonist thought it to no purpose to return an Answer to what plainly was contradictory to the common Sense of Mankind; and therefore convinc'd him only, by getting up and Walking. And the very same Return will baffle and expose all the Pretended Arguments for Necessity. For 'tis plain, He had a Power

(a) Had it not been a thing Undeniable that the Will of Man is free, and had not *Epicurus*, and his Follower *Lucretius*, very well known that it was a thing which every one could not but experience in Himself, he had certainly, as a very Learned Person observes (*Dr. Lucas Enquiry after Happiness*, Vol. I. p. 156, 157.) followed his Old Master *Democritus*, and asserted the Mind of Man to be as necessarily and fatally moved by the strokes of his Atoms, as Natural and Irrational Bodies are. But this Opinion he was forced to desert, and to assert the Liberty of the Soul of Man; and 'twas to make this out according to his Senseless Hypothesis, that he Invented that Unaccountable Oblique Motion of his Atoms; which *Lucretius* calls *Exiguum Clinamen Principiorum*. Lib. 2.

first whether he would have walked or not, he could have walked Five Turns, or Fifty; he could have gone across the Room, or length-wise; round it, or from Angle to Angle. And I dare say, no Sophistry or Metaphysicks whatever would have convinced him that none of these were in his Power, when he plainly found them all to be so; any more than he was convinced a Body could not move out of its place, when he had seen and tried a Thousand times that it would. 'Tis the same thing in reference to the Thoughts of our Minds, as it is in the Motions of our Bodies. We plainly find we have a Power in abundance of Cases, to prefer one thought before another, and to remove our Contemplation from one Notion or Idea to another: We can, in our Minds, compare and revolve over the several Objects of our Choice; and we can oftentimes choose whether we will do this, or not; and this Internal Freedom in Reference to our Thoughts and Idea's, we do as *plainly perceive*, and are as *sure* of, as we are that we can voluntarily move our Body or any part of it from place to place. And as I have plainly shewed you above, our Adversaries do grant and allow this when it is for their Turn.

But they will say, tho' we seem to be free, and do think and perceive our selves to be so, yet in reality we are not; and it is only our Ignorance of Things and Causes, which induces us to be of this mistaken Opinion (a); and the Idea of Liberty which Men have is

(a) Falluntur homines quod se putant, quæ opinio in hoc solo consistit, quod suarum Actionum sint conscii, & Ignari Causarum à quibus determinantur. Hæc ergo est eorum libertatis Idea quod suarum Actionum nullam cognoscunt Causam. Nam quæ aiunt humanas Actiones à Voluntate pendere verba sunt quorum nullam habent Ideam. Bapr. Spinoz. Op. Posthum. p. 73. Vid. etiam, p. 37.

they

they depend on the Will, is to talk about what they do not understand, and to use words of which they have no Idea's at all. To which, I say, that I cannot but be of the Opinion that it is a good Rational way enough of Proceeding, to pronounce of things according as we do experience them to be, and to declare them to be that which we have all the Reason in the World to think and believe that they really are. And I think we may well enough own and be contented with the Charge of Ignorance here laid upon us. For the Case is thus: We think our selves free, because we plainly find and experiment our selves to be so in a Thousand Instances; and this also these Penetrating Gentlemen sometimes, as I have shewed, do kindly allow; and we are indeed wholly Ignorant of any Causes that do absolutely determine us to Action; or which do necessitate us in what we do, previous to that free Power which we find in our selves; so that plainly perceiving our selves to have this free Power, and being Ignorant of any true Reason why we should believe we are mistaken in what we perceive and know, we do, indeed, (such is our Ignorance and Weakness) embrace the Opinion that there is a *Liberty of Action in Human Nature*. And this free Power or Liberty which we find in us, we not being deep Metaphysicians, call the *Will*; by which we understand, as I have shewed before, not any *Particular Act of Volition*, but the *Power or Faculty of Willing*. And since we plainly perceive that in many cases we are not determined to Action by any thing without us, but do choose or refuse, act or not act, according as we please; and being withal grossly Ignorant of any Cause these Actions have, but what we find and perceive

ceive them to have, we call our free *Will the Cause of these Actions, and say they depend on it*: and yet after all, do we not find out, that we talk about what we do not understand, and use words that we have no Idea of. But our Adversaries, it seems, have a quite different relish of things, they soar in a higher and more subtle Region, they will not condescend to speak common sense in this Matter; *Tho' they plainly understand, (as they tell us) that they are really free as to many Actions, and can deliberate whether they will do them or not, purely because they have a free Power so to do (a); tho' they are satisfied that they can act if they will, or forbear if they will (b); yet they say this is in reality a Mistake, and that there is no such thing as freedom after all, but that all Actions are absolutely necessitated.* And as for the *Power or Faculty* which is vulgarly called the *Will*; that sometimes is one thing sometimes another, according as they think fit to name it. Sometimes 'tis an *Act of Volition* that follows the *Ultimum dictamen Intellectus*, and sometimes 'tis the *Understanding itself (c)*. Now 'tis nothing *but an Idea (d)*, and by and by a meer *Ens Rationis (d)*, or an Imaginary Cause of Action, which *Ignorant Men* have fancied that they have in themselves (e). So hard is it for Men that fly so high, to have a distinct view of any thing below. But I proceed,

(a) Spinoza
Princip. Philos.
Cartes Demonstr.
p. 103.

(b) Hobbs Tri-
pos, p. 314.

(c) Spin. Op.
Posth. p. 87, 88.

(d) Ibid. p. 399.

(e) P. 73.

2. To another Argument, for the freedom of Human Nature; and that is, *the monstrous Absurdities and Consequences* of the contrary Opinion. For the Assertion that all our Actions are necessitated, it perfectly destroys the Notions of Good and Evil, Rewards and Punishments, and of all manner of Obligation

gation both to Divine and Human Laws : and consequently is the most Destructive Principle, that can be advanced, to the Good of Society. I have already proved that there is a Natural Distinction between Actions as to Good and Evil, that this is plainly discoverable by the Light of Reason, and that all Nations in all Ages of the World have been sensible of it; and if this be proved, (as I think it hath been) we ought not to desert it, only because we can't readily solve all the Difficulties about the Freedom of the Will of Man, which a Sceptical Man may raise against it; much less ought we to embrace an Opinion that perfectly Contradicts it; as this of absolute Necessity certainly doth. For if all things and Actions whatever are absolutely Necessary, and cannot possibly be otherwise than they are; there can be no such thing as Good or Evil, Right or Wrong, Honourable or Base, &c. And why should any Creatures trouble themselves about paying any Veneration to the Deity, if that he could not help making them just such as they are? and if he hath absolutely necessitated them to do just as they do? God hath, according to these Horrid Principles, no Natural Right to any Obedience from us, as a free Agent would, who had out of his own gracious Goodness bestowed so many Gifts and Mercies upon us. This Mr. Hobbs well knew, and therefore he tells us, That there is no Obedience due to God out of Gratitude to him for Creating or Preserving us, &c. (a) but what we pay him, is founded only in his Irresistible Power.

(a) *Leviath.*
p. 187.

And so likewise, as to Human Laws and the Good of the Government or Commonwealth where we are placed. No Man, according to these Abominable Tenets,

Tenets, hath any Obligation upon him to obey Rulers, to be just and honest in his Dealings, to be loving and merciful, helpful and beneficial to his Neighbours; but he may Rebel, Murder, Rob, and Oppress, without being Subject to any guilt at all; and if he can but escape Punishment from the Magistrate he is safe enough, and hath no reason to be disturbed in his own Mind; for he can't help any of all this, he is under an absolute necessity of doing what he doth, and no one ought to blame him for it. Indeed, *Spinoza* says, That the Government may, if they think fit, put such a Man to Death; but not because *he is Guilty and deserves it*, but because he is *Mischievous and Dangerous* to them, and therefore is to be feared. And when one wrote to him on this Point, alledging, that if the *Will were not free, All Vice would be excusable*; he Answers, *Quid inde (a) ? Nam homines mali non minus timendi sunt, nec minus perniciosi, quando necessariò mali sunt.*

(a) *Spinoz. Op. Posthum. p. 586*

By which he plainly allows that all Wickedness is excusable, tho' it be not always tolerable, as it is not when it becomes formidable. Fear is that which according to these Men doth every thing in the World, in this Case. A Subject pays Obedience to the Laws, not because he thinks himself bound in Conscience so to do, or because it is just and reasonable; but because he is afraid of Punishment if he do not do it. And the Magistrates Punish an Offender, not because they think he hath committed any Fault, or is Guilty of any Crime properly speaking; but because *They* are afraid of *Him*, and under an apprehension that he is likely to do them a Mischief. And thus a Man that is guilty of all manner of Immorality, an Assassinator
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of Princes, a Firer of Cities, a Betrayer of his Country, a Poisoner, Coiner, a Common Robber, or the most flagitious Villain that can be imagined, is as Innocent as a Saint from any guilt of Sin he hath upon him; for he is *necessitated* to do what he doth, he can't help it, any more than another Man can, that acts virtuously, as 'tis called: and therefore he may and ought to have as much Peace and Satisfaction in his own Mind, and as much Respect and Honour paid him from others too, provided they are not *afraid* of him, as ever any Man had.

But will not such a Principle as this be the most mischievous and dangerous to Mankind that can possibly be? Doth it not open a Door to all the Wickedness that can possibly enter into the Heart of Man to commit? And consequently ought not all Governments to *be afraid*, as they themselves would express it, of Men that vent such Notions as these, so plainly contradictory to, and inconsistent with the Good of Human Society?

And as this is a most *pernicious*, so 'tis the most *Impudent* and *Daring* Opinion that ever was advanced: for it charges all Mankind in all Ages of the World, with the most gross and palpable Folly that can be: For, besides that it gives the Lye to the Experience and certain Knowledge of every Body, as I shewed before; it renders all Laws, and Rules of Action, and all the Sanctions of them, ridiculous: it makes all *Advice* and *Exhortation* useless, and to no purpose; all *Censure*, *Punishment* and *Reproof* is *Unjust* and *Unreasonable*; All *Honours* and *Rewards* it renders *Unmerited*; And all *Knowledge*, *Wisdom*, *Care* and *Circumspection*, become by this means, the most foolish

lish and unaccountable things in the World ; for if all things are governed by Absolute Fatality, any one may see that all these things signifie Nothing at all, but 'tis plain, the Wifest Part of the World as they have been justly esteemed, are in reality the greatest Fools and most stupid Idiots that can be : for they encourage Men to act well, and discourage them from doing amiss, by Elaborate and Studied Methods, when after all, 'tis impossible according to this Notion, that any one can possibly avoid doing just as he doth.

Nor can I see how these wonderful *Discoverers* themselves, that have thus luckily found out that all Mankind are mistaken in thinking themselves Free, when they are not so ; I can't see, I say, how according to their own Notions *they* can be acquitted from being as *Ignorant* and *Mistaken*, and as arrant Fools as the rest of Mankind. For why do they write Books, and spin out such Elaborate Treatises as they fanfie they do ? and why should they set themselves up above others, and expect Praise and Glory for their *fine Thoughts* and *elevated Notions* ? they can't sure be so *Ignorant* as to expect to convince any Body, or to Profelyte any one over to their Opinion ? Can any Man help being of that Opinion he embraces ? if he can, he hath free Will, and is not necessitated to hold what he doth hold ; which destroys all they are so studiously advancing. But if he cannot alter his Opinion freely, but is absolutely necessitated to believe what he doth believe ; how ridiculous is it to pretend to Dispute or Argue in such a Case ? They will say, no doubt, that they are necessitated to write, and can't help it : But if the Government should Plead the same thing, for Punishing them for so doing ; they

they would, we know, make a large out-cry against *Persecution*, and the *Infringement of that Native Liberty*, that every Man hath to enjoy his own Opinion. For these Gentlemen make use of Liberty and Necessity, according as it best serves their purpose. When they commit Immoralities and Wicked Actions; they then ought not to be punished either by God or Man, because they are *necessitated to do it, and can't help it*. But if a Government, judging such Notions destructive to the Good of Human Society, and contrary to the express Word of God, thinks fit to Prohibit the Propagation of them, and to Punish the Authors of them: How do these Men then Cry up the *Liberty* of Human Nature? then every Man's Opinion ought to be free, no Compulsion must be used, every Man's Conscience is to be his Guide, and the like. But how ridiculously Vain is all this, according to these Principles? Is not the Magistrate as much necessitated to Punish as they are to Offend? and the Government to *make Laws* as they are to *break* them? Oh by no means! They would *be free* to Sin and to commit Wickedness, and then *necessitated* not to be Punished. They would have Men think them *necessitated* in all their Actions, so as to *excuse* them from blame, and they would have the Magistrate *free* to forbear Punishing them, tho' he think them never so guilty. That is, in short, they would do what they please, and no one should call them to an Account for it; they would act like *Fools*, and yet be thought *Wise Men*; they would proceed contrary to Reason, and yet have the Reputation of having Principles, and pursuing the Dictates of Reason and Truth: And they would build themselves a Reputation in
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the World by advancing Paradoxes contrary to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind: by pretending to a higher pitch of Knowledge than their Neighbours, and by calling all the rest of the World Fools and Ignorant. In a word they would say, with those in the Psalmist, *We are they that ought to speak, who is Lord over us.* This, I am fully perswaded, is what they aim at in all their Arguments and Objections against Religion, and particularly in the bustle that they make about this Point, of the *Absolute Necessity of All Events and Actions.* Which how weakly they Prove, and how contradictorily they Maintain, against the Common Sense and Experience of all Mankind, I think I have sufficiently shewn.

F I N I S.

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